

She had been the mistress of a famous poet.
Since she had taken the time to look me up,
I took her out for lunch.

We couldn't agree on anything.
She, a teacher also, complained of the sterile classrooms.
She would have preferred a divan and a coffeepot.
I need a podium on which to rest my gut.

She said her students wrote like Walter Cronkite.
My students don't write half that well.
She said she covered their papers with encouraging remarks,
while the best that I can ever manage is "Not Bad."

When she said at one point, "Nobody learns anything
anyway in a class they are forced to attend,"
I refrained from pointing out that I had never
attended a school
where attendance was optional.

-- Gerald Locklin

Long Beach CA

NEEDING IT

He'd been here
once &
threw beer in my face
so this time
we handled it
as gently as
we could
like baboons
delivering the
queen's baby
letting each other
finish sentences
straining hard to
make sense of our
separate chaos
not wanting to
do it again
wary of damaging it
beyond repair,
needing it
in short.

BOXES

Going thru boxes
that have been
locked away so long
they're total mysteries
unearthing letters &
the senseless things
that people hoard
finding in the bottom
of a box
a large color photo
of my first wife
that so sums up the
chaos & the sorrow
of our lives
I lean back
against the
closet door &
close my eyes,
feeling time itself
unravel
in a spinning wheel
that no hand
ever touches.